

Mind's Eye

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Author: Shiro Amayagi

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Summary: 1934. A brilliant young detective looks over his files on an enigmatic ninja by the name of Shotan. Normally he would know them front and back, but he suffers from severe amnesia... (Finally, an update!)

***Chapter 1*: Awakening**

Hey, guys. Trying my hand at real romance. Be afraid, seriously. My muses are gone for a while, seeing as too much stupid muse-banter only takes away from a story. Well, anyways, the pairing's a secret for now, but I'll give you a hint: It's not too common a pairing around here, but you'll slap yourself in the face on how blindingly simple it is. Gah, this is just as bad as stupid muse-banter. I'm going to write now.

~***~

It was a quiet day in Altin. A beautiful young brunette was walking down the road with some fresh fruit in her arms. Not too be misunderstood, there were many young brunettes there, but this one girl...what was it with her? He passed her on the road every day. She had her job, he had his. He was a detective. She was a waitress. He'd heard from a friend that she worked at a place called the Aerie, on the corner of Ruby and Elm. He worked at a small business owned by an old friend he'd trust with his life. He had girls left and right, lots of money and renown, devillish good looks, the guy was everything a person could ever dream of being. And yet...what did that matter when he looked at her? Sees her every day, goes to the Aerie for a drink after work every time he's got a case that takes longer than a couple of hours to crack, and yet he still didn't even know her name. Hard to believe he grew up with her.

Unless of course, they were lying when they told him that. A couple of months ago, he'd been on a huge case looking for a murderer in Xian that went by the name of Shotan.

(flashback)

There were rumours going around about him. *Mass murderer that can slay 100 with one swipe of his sword; handsome devil that manipulates the wind to kill his enemies; mindless killing machine, devoid of emotions...* He'd heard them all. His mission was simple: Find Shotan and apprehend him. Kill him if necessary. Of course, brave soul that he was, he went. Shotan saw him coming, and bludgeoned him with a gigantic stone repeatedly. He awoke in the hospital, and they told him he had amnesia.

She left the room as soon as he woke up. He asked who she was, and one of the doctors told him he grew up with her, but then the other doctor elbowed him in the stomach. It made him wonder why it was bad for him to know about her. He began feeling woozy, and decided a couple more hours of sleep was necessary.

When he awoke from his nap, a purple haired woman was standing in the room talking with a doctor. He laid back down, not wanting to intrude, but for some reason, he found himself listening.

"Doctor Stone, be serious here. He survived being attacked by Shotan for a reason. I think it's his time to learn Psynergy. I request that once he is released from your care, that he is sent into mine for at least a month. If he is an Adept, he will benefit twofold from this training. If not, at least he will become sharper in mind, body, and spirit. More of a match for Shotan." she said.

He chose this minute to get up and walk over to the woman. "Miss, if your training can help me become stronger to fight this 'Shotan', I'll do it." he said.

"Why are you so willing to go fight Shotan, anyways? Do you remember anything about him?" asked the doctor.

"No, sir. Nothing at all. But if she wants me to be there so that I can be strong enough to beat him, I have a feeling it's my place to go, and become stronger, because I might be needed in the fight against him." he said.

"Brave move, sir, but are you sure it's wise?" asked the doctor.

"Yes. By the way, do I have a job, sir?" he asked.

"Yeah. You work as a detective with Mr. Sam Kraden." said the doctor.

"Then I'll be going now to tell him I'm going to need one month of leave. How would I get there?" he asked.

"I will stay with you. This will be the first test of your memory. I want you to try and find it yourself. If we get too far away, I'll lead you there, but otherwise you must find your own way. By the way, I'm known around here as Master Hama, of the Lama Temple nearby."

"I see. My name is-"

(end flashback)

~***~

Fin. Finito. Kaput. The end of the chapter, folks. Picked up my meager cliffhanger skills from reading Midnight and Triad's stuff, so if you want more, force THEM to update. Yes, I know full well that was purely evil, but I want 'em to update too...aye, I'm gonna go now. Need a good non-GS oriented laugh? Go read 8-Bit Theatre. . Later.

***Chapter 2*: Leave**

Hey again. Wow...Akiko's the only one that reviewed...I don't know whether to be honoured or insulted. Anyways, here's the second chapter of Mind's Eye, if any of you care.

~***~

(return to the flashback)

"Don't try to remember, my friend. Not yet. Let's find the way to your office first," said Master Hama.

"But I...I think..." the man tried to say.

"Don't think of anything but the task ahead of you. Now, left or right?" she asked.

"...Left. Why won't you let me tell you my name?" asked the man. For a short while, it was silent, as they walked down the road. They passed a fruit vendor, and Master Hama bought them both apples, which they ate wordlessly. Once she finished, she turned to him.

"Do you want to get stronger or not?" she asked.

"Well yes, of course, otherwise I wouldn't have come with you...but what purpose does keeping my identity secret from you serve?" he asked.

"Quite a big one, I'm afraid. If you can't tell me your name, then there's no way you can get any confirmation from me. Anything - a name, a person, anything could bring back memories that might stop you from becoming stronger. I have to keep you in the dark for no. That will make it exponentially easier, no, scratch that, it will make it

possible to reach your dormant psynergy, if my senses are correct," she said.

"But Master Hama...what good is the strength you claim I will have if I don't even know who I am?" asked the man.

"All will be revealed to you in good time," she said. As she looked ahead, she noticed that the man had led them directly to the agency, and in record time. "Impressive. Now, you must promise me you won't ask anyone to confirm your identity, or it will be much harder to find anything within you, and that's not a good thing at all. Wait here, and if anyone approaches you, tell them not to tell you your name. Understood?"

"Yeah, sure. I can't know my own name. Got it," he said, cynically.

"Get off it, we can figure it all out later, at the temple. You just have to be patient for now," With that, she walked into the agency, and asked to see Mr. Kraden.

Hama looked around the room. A picture of the man she had been going with and another, aging man fishing on the Karagol caught her eye. The aging man appeared to be laughing as the younger man wrestled with a Man o' War. She looked over to the desk and focused her attention entirely to the man at the desk. "Mr. Sam Kraden, I presume?" she asked.

"That would be me, miss. Anything I can help you with?" asked Kraden in reply. Master Hama noticed immediately by his accent that he must have come from around the middle Gondowan region - probably a Tolbian

citizen by birth. Of course, she could've just read his mind, but she decided against it. There was really no point to doing so.

She fidgeted for a second. *What's he thinking? I'd read his mind, but I don't wanna reveal myself to be an Adept right off unless I absolutely have to. He might have the dormant psynergy that would allow him to see me doing so.* "Well...uh...my name is Hama, and I'm a martial arts instructor from the nearby Lama Temple. I was at the hospital when your employee was brought in, and I saw great potential in him to gain strength. You'll have to forgive me for not using his name, since he may be nearby," said Hama.

Kraden furrowed his brow in confusion. "Why would that be a problem, Miss Hama?" he asked in reply.

"One's inner strength is sometimes blocked by memories...sorrow, anger, happiness...anything can keep someone from becoming strong. If he was to hear his name, memories might return. He might not completely master his true strength. He'd be too soft to fight against Shotan. Surely you understand how imperative that is," she said, calmly.

"Yes, yes of course. We can't let him go soft on us now. Too many lives are at stake," he replied, shaken a bit.

She smiled inwardly, but kept the same calm demeanor as she began with. "So then you'll allow him leave?" she asked.

"I'm afraid I have no choice. What should I do about other raiders in the meantime though?" asked Kraden.

"There was a young man named Ivan in town looking for a detective job. I told him about this place, and he said he'd come by later. He's not from around Altin though. He comes from Bilibin, actually," she said.

"I see. Thank you, Miss Hama. Good day," said Kraden.

"Thank you, sir. We should be back in a couple of months, three at most. Take good care of Ivan - he'll be very beneficial to the detective work around here, I'm sure of it," Hama said, and left quietly.

"Very beneficial...? What do you mean, beneficial? How are you sure?" he asked, though Hama made no reply but a silent walk out the door.

"So what'd he say?" asked the man.

"You've been granted leave. Now let's go and get some food. We'll probably not reach Xian, much less the temple, by nightfall, and we'll more than likely be hungry," she replied.

~***~

Aye...if only I could've better predicted a way to write a good long chapter...I don't wanna do the "they did this, they did that, they did this" to keep my story going longer, so I'll have to cut off here for today. Maybe I can get some more inspiration for this from playing FFTA? I already got some...for later chapters...MUCH later chapters. Um, Nagrarok!!!

Felix: Would'ja QUIT with the Nagrarok stuff? That's just a sword...an FFTA sword. Not a psynergy!!!

GACK!!! NO MUSE!!! NOT HERE!!! GO AWAY!!!

Felix: But, but...

NO!!! ...Oh yeah, and I wasn't PLANNING on making it a psynergy...but who knows now?

Felix: *facevaults* *goes over to a corner and curls up into a fetal position* *begins rocking back and forth violently* My life is over, over, over, my life is over, I am going to die...
repeats it several times

NO!!! That's HILTZ'S phrase!!! Remember?! The Christmas fic back in the Zoids section? The one that had REVIEWS?!
Aw, whatever. Later.

***Chapter 3*: Attacking and Healing**

Mind's Eye finally has a chapter three! Y'all are gonna have to forgive me for waiting so long, I've been making a game on RM2K, and any RM2K user out there knows how long that can take, especially if they want original sprites for their games and they can't exactly make them too well. ^ _ ^
Anyways, here's the chapter, and thank you for being patient. (wow, even Akiko hasn't yelled at me yet).

~***~

It was cold for the lower regions of Angara. He didn't like it too much. Even someone like him had gotten used to the warm temperatures of Altin summers. Walking on, the school came into view. The oriental look intrigued him a little, and his features started to brighten a little bit. Then he saw the monks. That would mean he'd have some company. A small, weak smile creased his face. "So, are you going to tell me my name yet?" he asked.

"You're impossible, my friend," she replied. They walked quietly into the school, the man taking the sights in like a child in a candy store, and Hama telepathically calling three monks of the Venus, Mars, and Mercury elements into the new building they had put together for the purpose of training when it rained out their outside practices.

The three monks walked into the building. The Venus monk, Felix, looked nice enough, but something was apparently on his mind. *There is indeed*, Master Hama said to his mind. The Mars monk, Garet, seemed to be open and friendly, but kind of... *The word is 'airheaded', my friend*, she said again. And the Mercury monk, Picard? Open enough, but he seemed to be hiding something.

"Alright, my friend. Now that we have arrived, it is time for you to unleash your element. Felix, I want you to test him first," she said. Felix walked up in surprisingly confident stride.

"Close your eyes. I am about to use a psynergy. Once it's over, I'm going to ask you to tell me what you saw. Please remember what it is you saw," he said. The man closed his eyes, and Felix unleashed Gaia in his mind, so that only a scene of it would be relayed to the man. "Now, what did you see?" he asked.

"You, holding your hands up and glowing," he said.

"Did you see a large sphere of golden light in my hands?" asked Felix.

"No," replied the man.

"Well then, your element is not Venus. Picard, come on up here and test him," said Felix.

Picard walked up with a slight smile, apparently his means of greeting people. He placed his hands on the man's shoulders. "Again, close your eyes. I will unleash a psynergy, and you will tell me what kinds of energy flows you feel. Do not worry, as describing it will be easy if you are of my element," said Picard. The man again closed his eyes as Picard, surprisingly, set Shade to the man. "Open your eyes and tell me what you feel," he said.

"A presence in my mind. I would think...a small, blue creature..." said the man.

"Does it feel natural to have it there?" asked Picard. The man nodded. Picard didn't waste any time. He pulled a rock from his pocket and threw it at the man. Suddenly, the

man glowed blue and the rock disintegrated into dust on contact. "Good, good. You handled that very well. Come on out, Shade," he said.

The blue creature that had been resting in the man's mind appeared on his shoulder, then bounced over to Picard. "Good girl," he said. "Now, it's rather obvious that your element is Mercury, so I will be your instructor. As for the rock, if you hadn't blocked it, Shade would have unleashed herself to make a defensive shield for you. To be honest, I expected her to. And besides, the fact that it felt natural for her to be there made all the difference anyways. I just wanted to test you further and see if it was possible. Hama, you were right about him. He's definitely gonna be strong. You'll be bunking with me and Felix, my friend. Come on," he said, as the two of them exited the room.

"Master, are you sure that he's the one Destiny proclaimed would save Weyard? I've been getting...disturbing letters from Kay. Bandit raids on Vale have been increasing in number and force, and a few of the bandits have attempted rape. Monsters have been getting WAY too close to the town. What's worse, a pack of Zombies made an attempt on the Mayor's life. Can he handle this?" asked Felix.

"He could handle the bandits without psynergy. They don't have anything to do with Destiny's proclamation. That is just ill fortune. The monsters, however? He'll need his psynergy for that. The shield he made was a rather hard type to use, much less master. Picard only mastered it last week. Rain Barrier, I think he calls it. Knowing Picard, they'll probably start with that. Once he knows some decent attack psynergies such as Ice Prism and Supercool, and a good strong Avoid, we'll be good to go," she replied.

"If you say so..." said Felix.

The training began the next day. "Prism!" yelled Picard. The huge ball of ice crashed down from the air into Felix's Gaia shield. True to Picard's power, Felix was pushed back a foot. "Now, my friend, raise your right hand. Focus on the image of the psynergy and cry out its name. We'll cover targeting first. Look at Felix. He gives off a Venus aura. Do you sense it yet?" he asked.

"I do," he said.

"Good. Now that you can see his aura, you can send psynergy his way. In the same way, the psynergy he unleashes will share his aura. Felix, now I will need you to cast Gaia, but don't use it as an attack. I'll need you to solidify it into a rock," he said.

"I'll try. Here goes," he said, as he unleashed Gaia. Slowly but steadily, he allowed the psynergetic light to rise. After it was about a foot off the ground, he focused intently on mountains, pebbles, anything stone he could think of. All of the sudden, the light became a hard stone and crashed to the ground leaving a small indentation in the ground. "It worked."

"Thank you, Felix. Now, focus. That rock has the same aura as Felix. Do you understand now?" asked Picard.

"Y-yes...I do. What do I do next?" asked the man.

"As I said at first, raise your right hand and focus on the Prism psynergy I just used. Got the image in your mind? Good. Now focus on the aura coming from the rock. With both images in your mind, use Prism. Don't be afraid. I promise you can do it," said Picard.

The man repeated Picard's gestures. "Okay...here goes..." he said, as he began to focus on the images. As they began to blend together in his mind, a ball of ice similar in shape to Picard's began to form in the air. The more they ran together, the larger the ball got, until it was nearly the size of Picard's. "Prism!!!" he cried out. The ball crashed into the rock, making a rather large indentation, considering it was his first try. Picard looked at him with great pride.

"Good job. Now it's time for lunch. Let's go get leave from Master Hama to go hunt some wild monsters. They taste very good, and are quite nutritious as well. You'll enjoy it. Just have an open mind. I'll take a sword. You should take a lance for now. See how you like it," he said. They walked to the shrine conversing about psynergy and Shade. The man learned that there were more tactics to using psynergies, such as using Djinni to remember skills for quick use. He also learned that Shade was a Djinni, and that she, along with all other Djinni, had special effects when used properly. Shade's effect was a defensive shield. The two finally reached the shrine.

"Master Hama, considering it's an hour to lunch, would it be alright if we go hunting for some food? Call it an exercise in weapon usage," said Picard, with a grin spreading across his face.

Master Hama found herself supressing a laugh as well. *//Exercise in weapon usage? Ha! They're just hungry//* "Picard, I'm a mind reader. One would think you'd have learned by now. Let's stick our new student with a sword as well, shall we? He wouldn't look right with a lance." Picard looked at her for a second, studying her features to see if she was giving them permission. "...Yes, Picard. That means you can go. Catch me something, too,"

she said, with a note of finality, and finally dismissed them to hunt.

"Picard? Tell me, what did I do yesterday? That one thing where I made the shield," asked the man.

"The shield? That's actually a skill I only recently mastered myself. I call it Rain Barrier. When we get back to the school, we'll do some work on that. After lunch, of course," Picard replied. Then, a Mad Mole appeared. "Stay calm, my friend. He isn't very powerful, but he's also not as weak as he seems. I want you to go after him with your sword. On my mark, you will go on the offensive. 3...2...1...now!" he whispered.

The man drew his sword as ordered, and charged headlong at the mole. He swung left, and hit the mole with the flat of the blade by accident. Instead of killing it, he gave it a small bruise and left himself open to attack. The mole saw its chance and took it, swiping at his sides with its sharp claws. The man was knocked back by the attack, but quickly got back into the fight. After a few rounds of slashing and swiping, the mole jumped up at the man, preparing to swipe his head off his neck. The man fortunately avoided his intended fate, but recieved a deep gash to his neck all the same. The shock of the pain caused him to swing his sword as a reflex, cutting the mole in half. He rose to his feet shakily, and resheathed his sword. "Why in Sol's name did you make me fight a monster like that?! I nearly got killed!!!" he said, angrily yet weakly.

"Shade, come on out, girl," he said. The djinni again left the man and appeared in Picard's hand. "My friend, you need to have some faith in me. While we're out here, I'm going to teach you how to heal. Focus your mind on a wound, preferably the one on your neck. Now, focus on an

image of it as if it were healed. Once the psynergy awakens in you, the word is Ply. Try it."

He did as he was told. The feeling of the images blurring and blending in his mind came to him again, and his hands began to glow with healing light. He slightly cupped his right hand and instinctively brought it within an inch of his neck. "Ply," he said. The wound began to close slowly until the pain was gone and the bleeding stopped.

"A basic attack, and a basic healing psynergy. Hama said I could tell you when this happened," said Picard.

"Does this mean...?" asked the man.

"Yes. Good job, Alex."

~***~

V\00-|-Z0|2!!! He has a name!!! SCORE!!! And now everybody who wants to know can quit pelting me with "It's Isaac or Gareth! It's Isaac or Gareth! I know I'm right!" ...Okay, there wasn't exactly *pelting*, but this'll teach you never to second-guess an Amayagi. I hope. Or maybe not, that works too. Take care, and happy New Year!!!

***Chapter 4*: Courage and Fear**

First off, I want to express a sincere apology for waiting seven months to work on this chapter. I didn't mean to die out altogether, but I just forgot all about it after a while. Within the next few months I'm going to be revising all of my work and improving it accordingly. Making sure everything is written correctly, making sure what's to be funny is funny and what's to be serious is serious. Basically, you'll be seeing a lot more of me in the near future, especially if you double as a Zoids reader. I hope you guys don't think less of me for holding out on this chapter for seven months, so after review responses, you'll get your chapter.

Sora: Thank you! It means a lot to get such an enthusiastic review on this. And I don't quite know why I didn't have Garet test him, actually...

Vilya: Thank you as well, Vilya! Again, the enthusiasm is an excellent reminder of why I write. And yes, feel free to pester me about updating anytime you want! I could use some of that pizza you're sending to Triad... stomach growls

Ragnarok: Well, in FFTA, the Nagrarok is a fake of the Ragnarok, I do believe. That little comment was just to make Felix mad. And the psynergy was fun to make up. Thanks for the compliment, dude! And nice name format, too.

Shadow: Thanks for coming by! Get online sometime, I never see you anymore!)

Okay, and on with the story!

Alex was, while overjoyed to know something about himself, confused at why he was kept in the dark until he learned a basic attack and healing psynergy. Of course, Picard wouldn't tell him. That much was as painfully obvious as painfully obvious could be. So did he ask Gareth? Sounded possible, but he decided to stay away from that. Gareth seemed to be a warrior, not a thinker, or one to answer such a question. Alex decided if he could bet money on whether or not Gareth knew the answer, he'd wager all he had. Then, only Felix was left in his potential group of talkers. *Must remember to ask Felix all about it later.*

As it turned out, when Alex finished that thought, the pair of Mercury Adepts were surprised to learn that the Mad Mole wasn't alone. Two pairs of eyes stared at them in the forest, similar to the horrible yellow eyes of the mole Alex had nearly gotten killed by earlier. He raised his right hand up to his neck and gently touched the spot where the aforementioned mole had tried to remove his head. He felt no pain, instead feeling a gentle coolness on his hand. His left hand slowly moved to his sword sheath, and, with his voice only barely above a whisper, he asked, "Picard, what do we do?"

On cue, two more pairs of eyes appeared, then four, then eight. Sixteen moles had appeared, clearly angry at the loss of their comrade. Each mole seemed to be twice as big as the one Alex had fought, with claws twice as long and probably three times as sharp. Alex deduced that he had killed a child, probably their pack's youngest. The moles began to close in so that there was only a small space between each of them.

Picard's eyes shifted to see that they were indeed surrounded by not sixteen, but twenty-four moles. "Alex, we've got a problem. These moles aren't anything like I've

ever seen before. They're using a tried and true war method called a pincer attack. But how would a group of monsters know anything of war tactics? It's just impossible...they don't have that type of knowledge...they're just too stupid..." he mused, more to himself than to Alex.

"Stupid or not, they have us surrounded. Odds are they have reinforcements, as well. Should we attempt to run away, or do you believe we can take them?" Alex asked, wondering if there was a way to run away after starting the fight.

"Do not draw your sword. These monsters are smart enough to destroy you if you rush in hastily," replied Picard.

"So how do we get away?"

"I wanted to teach you this later on, but we will need it now. It's one of the Mercury element's most useful psynergies, besides the Ply and Wish series of psynergy. To explain it scientifically, once used, it becomes a rather large bit of ATP inside your body. It will allow you to speed up your movements on command, and since it's foreign energy, using it won't leave you very drained at all. Now, to do this, focus on your body. Slow your breathing to a low speed, calm your nerves, and imagine that you're running very fast. You will know when the time is right to call forth Avoid," he said, strangely worried but maintaining his calm demeanor all the same.

Alex said nothing, as he took in more air and released more air. The mindset of running at his slowly calming state caused the familiar feeling of the blending again. His breathing slowed down even more, and his nerves finally relaxed as much as they could. No sooner than he finished, he drew his sword and cried out at the top of his lungs, "Avoid!!!"

It was so strange to him. He could see the moles move as if it were in slow motion, and then the time flow returned to normal. He snapped back into reality just in time to avoid a swipe to the neck from another mole. He leveled his sword at the mole's neck, and charged headlong at him. With three feet separating him and the mole, he blinked. When his eyes opened less than half a second later, he was past the now headless mole with his sword point touching the tree. He turned around and started running again. His speed steadily picked up as he swung at another mole. He managed to take that mole out rather quickly, and stopped.

He noticed at this point that Avoid was the perfect way to escape, and if needed, regroup at Lama Temple. As he moved to get Picard and inform him of the plan, he noticed that Picard's hands were full for dealing with five moles at once and unable to break away long enough to call any psynergy. A glint of light caught his eyes, and Alex looked just in time to see a giant mole charging headlong at Picard.

He noticed that the mole was easily twice the height of all the others out there, which were human height as was, but as logical thought is usually the farthest thing from a fighter's mind in such a desperate situation, Alex disregarded the size difference, and did the only thing he could. He ran in the larger mole's path and just barely beat it to the punch. He raised his sword and deflected the mole's attack as he felt the remainder of his Avoid powers leave him. The mole jumped back quickly and began to again charge at Picard. Alex managed to discern that the mole he was fighting was more human-like than others, consisting of very human type fingers. A ball of psynergetic light formed in its hand, and it shaped itself into a sword. It and Alex clashed swords a few times, and, noticing it was useless to either fighter, quickly dropped their weapons and moved on to hand-to-hand combat.

Alex punched it in the stomach, but it didn't do much of anything. As he punched, he attempted to call forth Avoid. He managed to punch the mole three times quickly before he found the energy leaving him. He kept calling it forth, and it kept leaving. After a few minutes, Alex seemed to notice that the mole's movements began to increase in speed exponentially, as if...

...As if he were using Avoid.

Slowly, he figured out what was happening. His Avoid was being taken from him by that mole, consequentially hurting himself more than the mole when he used it. He ran as fast as he could to get his sword back in his arms and the mole's sword as well. He succeeded in getting the mole's sword, but the mole stepped on his own, shattering it to pieces. Alex noted mentally that Master Hama would be none too pleased with that. However, it was no time to be crying over broken swords. Alex carefully maneuvered himself so that a rock separated them, and called forth Prism. It hit the mole hard, causing it to stumble backwards. He then saw his chance to charge, running around the rock and stabbing the mole with its psynergetic sword. Unfortunately, the sword disappeared on contact, and the mole arose, unhurt.

Picard finally found an opening and landed a severe blow on two of the moles attacking him, and moved out of the cluster of moles, using a weaker Avoid to get behind them and kill them from behind. He rushed over to help Alex, but stopped for a moment, pondering the consequences. Under normal circumstances, he would have stayed back and allowed his pupil to fight on his own, but it didn't seem like an option to Picard as he saw the mole punch Alex in the stomach using his Avoid to add momentum to his attack.

Alex flew back into a tree, snapping a few branches off in the process. Upon further examination of his body, he saw a deep gash on his chest, possibly from the mole's claws. He rose to his feet rather shakily, supporting himself on a limb he broke off the tree. Once he got to his feet, he attempted to cast Ply on his chest, but was quickly thrown back down on the ground by the rampaging mole. Picard noticed that in the mole's charge, that it left a crucial weak spot open. As it landed, it stayed in that position. Picard cast Avoid on himself and charged at the mole in his accelerated speed. His sword pierced the mole under the left arm, passing straight through to the heart.

The mole collapsed, dead. Picard rushed over to Alex and cast Ply on him. Then he lifted Alex to a resting position on his shoulder. "Good job, my friend. Good job."

It was dark. Alex couldn't seem to move a muscle. He saw the light of Ply, and he felt Picard's psynergy washing over his mind. It was strange, and a little cool for his tastes, but he was grateful all the same. He opened his eyes just in time to see a man approach from behind the grove of trees opposite those he had been thrown into.

He was a blonde man, about Alex's height, dressed in strange red clothes that made him look like something of a thief. His movements were slow and unsteady, and his eyes looked empty. As he spoke, Alex could distinguish, although rather faintly, two voices.

"Good job," he said, sneeringly.

"Who...are you?" asked Alex.

"This body belongs to a man by the name of Dune, but you will refer to me as Hausen, soon to be the destroyer of humankind!!!" came the reply of the two voices.

"Destroyer...of humankind...? Why...would you..." With that, Alex collapsed to the ground in a heap.

"Alex!" cried Picard. "Hang in there, Alex!"

"Ha ha ha...it looks like your friend can't even stand on his own two feet. What kind of weaklings are you humans? You should never have been created," he said.

"What do you want with us?! Who do you work for?!"

"Your inquiry doesn't frighten me, Picard," replied Hausen. Picard's eyes widened in horror at this last word.

"How do you know my name?!"

"Fool. I know all," he said, horrifically calm.

"How?! How do you know?!"

"You need not know that now. All you need to know is that I am far more powerful than you will ever be, and to stay out of my way - should you survive this encounter, that is," he replied.

"So you want to fight?!"

"You fool. You wouldn't last two minutes. I am, however, interested in your student, Alex. You see, I have bigger plans for him. All it requires is a little manipulation and..." he trailed off at that point, assured that his point was made evident.

"You stay away from my student!" shouted Picard. Fire raged in his eyes as his left hand subtly gripped the sheath of his longsword.

"So determined. Child, remember your place in this world. You are weak, and I am strong. But I will let you live today."

"I won't allow you to destroy humankind, Hausen. I won't!" cried Picard, as his mind began to channel the mental energies of Megacool, and he secretly called upon Shade.

Hausen laughed heavily. "And I suppose you think you're going to stop me, is that correct?" he asked.

"Of course! You are *not* destroying the human race, and you are *not* going near my student! Is that clear?!"

"Child, you are such a fool. Have it all figured out, do you? Use your Megacool Psynergy to damage me, and rely on your Djinni for protection. Once you have me off guard, you'll summon Mercury, is that correct?" he asked. The subhuman mixture of voices masked an aura of extreme sadness. A cry for help, it seemed.

Picard's eyes narrowed, and his eyes shifted to his sword. He slowly rotated the sheath, so that when he attacked, he would hit this 'Dune' with the flat of the blade, and hopefully free him from Hausen's possession. Alex chose this moment to rise, rather shakily, to his feet. He knew the name 'Hausen' was familiar to him, but he couldn't place it until he heard the laugh.

Unfortunately, he was too busy passing out to put his finger on it.

ATP - Adenosine Triphosphate. The energy your body creates from the oxygen you breathe. This is actually the energy you survive on, rather than the air you breathe. I'd be happy to answer any of your questions on AIM, so please contact me if you wanna know what the heck I'm talking about.

And there is your chapter. Like I said, I'm finally back to updating stuff, and I'm not stopping until everything is done. By then, I'll probably have more story ideas, so there. See you guys soon!

***Chapter 5*: Shards of Power**

And he's back again! You ever get that feeling that you have to write whenever inspiration hits? I do. And it hit. We will return you to your regularly scheduled story after a few review responses.

Karst-Blazen: I'm liking all this enthusiasm I'm getting. Here's a new chapter, and I got it out soon, just like you asked!

The Rain Child: I don't know...I seem to have a previous review response from you about that review from Void, I think. But thanks for reading anyway!

"Don't try it, human. You can't defeat me, not with that cheap parlor trick," said Hausen, calmly.

"What the...? How could you know what I was going to do?!", asked a bewildered Picard.

"My power is absolute, human. I know all," Hausen smugly replied.

"But that's..."

"Impossible? Unfair? Or perhaps...evil? Forget it, I am not here to humour you, child. I take my leave."

As Hausen departed, a small whisper came of the second voice. Ever growing, yet barely audible, it cried as loudly as it could manage, "*Help me...!*"

Picard, enraged, drew his sword and charged headlong at the fiend, Hausen. Calling forth the mental energies of Hail

Prism, he swung at Hausen with all of his strength. However, before the blade reached him, Hausen threw Picard backwards with sheer force of psynergy.

"You cannot hope to touch me, human. You are far too weak," explained Hausen, as he stepped backward calmly. A ray of light emerged from his body upward into the sky, as the body Hausen occupied transformed into a ball of light that flew away northbound.

"I could not...save either...one of them...Alex...or Dune...", said Picard, barely audible, as fatigue finally robbed his body of consciousness.

He awoke in a rather large room, surrounded by four people. Picard, he recognized, but he didn't know the other three. An armoured man with a large blade, likely a warrior. Another was a man dressed as an Acolyte, likely a scholar, or a mage of sorts. The last was a beautiful red-haired woman with a gentle smile, who was likely a healer. He looked at them inquisitively and asked them, "Who are you, and why am I here?"

The armoured man spoke first. "I am Sion, the man beside me is Surlent, and the woman by your bedside is Riza. We are the bearers of the Jades."

"Pleasure to make your acquaintance. I'm Alex."

"We are pleased to meet you as well, Alex. Now, in regards to your other question, you are here because we brought you here. We found you lying in the forest near where his most recent spike of energy had occurred," said Surlent.

"I see...so what are these Jades you speak of?"

"Jewels of great power. When used for their intended purpose, they are the body of the Rudra. Hausen, the lunatic you encountered, wanted nothing more than to be the next Rudra in life. He quested for these Jades, and was killed on a search," replied Surlent.

"And who killed him?", asked Alex.

"The former Rudra. The one who destroyed the divine race."

"Divine race...?"

Surlent continued. "The Danans. They were too powerful for the liking of the gods, so a being of great destructive force was created, hereafter known as 'Rudra'. His only task in life was to destroy the Danans, then he would sleep for eternity, and guard his Jades. Over time, thieves and treasure hunters found the sleeping body of the Rudra, and were granted a Jade as measure of their courage, power, wisdom, and kindness. The Jades moved to another if the person they resided in encountered one of greater courage, or such as their trait was. Hausen, unaware of this, decided to steal the Jades from the body of the former Rudra. The Rudra awakened and killed him, but his soul lingered on the Earth."

"So he possesses people to find the Jades?"

"Yes and no, Alex," interjected Sion, "You see, he was searching for the Jades. When he encountered Dune, and found that he was carrying a Jade, he possessed the poor soul. The Jade split into many pieces, and we're searching for the shards. If we can gather enough of them, then we'll overpower Hausen, force him out of Dune's body, and take the remaining Jade shards to make the fourth Jade. Then, we have to become the Rudra. If one of us does it, surely the human race won't be destroyed."

"Your friend here woke up first, and told us everything about this Hausen fellow you encountered. You see, we're searching for him, and we'll need all the help we can get," said Riza.

"I'd love to help, Miss Riza, but I don't know if I'm allowed to abandon my training..."

A purple-haired woman emerged from the shadows and appeared directly behind Alex. "My dear friend," she said, "There will be no 'abandoning' of your training at all."

"Master Hama!", cried Alex.

"Yes. Now, this is entirely up to you, Alex, but I want you to choose wisely. You may stay with these people and continue your training here, or you may return to my dojo and continue your training with us. Just choose wisely," she replied.

"Master...this is no easy choice..."

"Do what your heart tells you, and I will support you."

"Then...I must stay here. That jerk, Hausen...I can not sit back and let the world be in danger. Sion, Surlent, Riza, I'll do everything I can to help. Just tell me how," said Alex, with fierce determination.

"Alex...you have made the right choice," said Master Hama, "And I believe you will go far. I had hoped you would choose to stay with them, and I am glad that was your choice. Picard and I have talked it over, and he will stay with you as well."

"Hey! Don't forget us, Master!", came a cry from across the room. Alex looked in the direction of the sound to see the approaching forms of Felix and Garet. "We're here too!"

"Alex, we've talked it over with them and decided to stay too. There is much you must learn in a short time, and We can't shoulder all the burden on Picard," said Felix.

"You understand, right?", said Gareth.

"Of course," replied Alex.

"Good. 'Cause I'm starving and I'd rather us eat than stand around talking," said Gareth.

"One track mind as always...don't you know anything else?", inquired Picard, accusingly.

"Not when I'm hungry," replied the Mars Adept, sheepishly.

"Well, good news, then. I brought back those moles Picard and Alex took down, and the meat's frying right now. Should be done in about five minutes," said Sion.

"Alright!", exclaimed Gareth, as he ran into the kitchen.

"Please excuse him...he's an idiot," said Picard.

"Oh no, that's nothing. Dune was the same way...", said Riza, as a small tear rolled down her face.

"Don't cry, Riza. We'll find him," said a reassuring Picard.

"...I hope so..."

Okay. And there's the chapter. Sorry it's short, but it's entirely exposition, and they do tend to have a hard time with being long...

Anywho, now that chapter five is done, I'm closer to back on track with this story. I just need about seven more chapters

to make up for my absence. Oh, and if you recognize the new characters, let me know. I wanna see if they're well-known characters. For now, take care, and I'll see you later!

"Toki no rizumu wo shireba, mo ichido torebu, darou..."

-Fukai Mori, Do As Infinity